

ARKANSAS GAZETTE EPA plans to add site in state to list

GAZETTE STAFF AND UPI

The Environmental Protection Agency Thursday proposed expanding the Superfund toxic waste cleanup program by adding 38 more sites, including one in Arkansas, to its list of the worst hazard-

ous waste sites in the country.

The list now includes 850 proposed sites eligible for federal money that will finance most of the cleanup work. The 38 sites named Thursday will be evaluated to determine how contaminated materials could best be removed and how high they will rate on the EPA's cleanup list.

Arkwood, Inc., of Omaha (Boone County) closed in 1984 because of the sluggish market for the company's chemically treated fence posts and the cost of cleaning up the hazardous wastes cited by the EPA, said Bob Barker, an official

for Mass Merchandisers, Inc., of Harrison, owner of the Omaha plant and a similar one in Lamar (Johnson County).

Barker said the company had been working with the EPA's office in Arkansas since 1981 to clean up "mainly surface contamination" on parts of the plant's 10-acre grounds. He said chemicals from freshly treated bundles of posts dripped on the ground, causing the contamination. He said the site would probably be cleaned up soon without federal supervision. "We don't think it's a major catastrophe," he said.

EPA to test Polk County plant

BY DOUG THOMPSON
Democrat Benton Bureau

MENA - The federal Environmental Protection Agency has ordered tests to determine if Mid-South Wood Products Co. is tainting its Polk County site with chromium and arsenic.

"Our contractor will make 10 soil borings to determine if anything is escaping from wood-treatment plants there," Mary Ellen Guay, public affairs representative for the EPA's regional headquarters in Dallas, said Thursday.

"Three of those borings will become permanent monitoring wells," she said. "It will take 60 days to get this survey under way, then the results must be evaluated."

"The additional data must

be included in the cleanup plan. A public hearing on a cleanup plan, I'd say, won't come before December," she said.

Until Aug. 27, the EPA had planned to pay for the cleanup of PCBs and creosote found at the site through use of federal Superfund money. Now, Ms. Guay said, Mid-South will have to pay at least part of the cleanup costs if the agency can prove that the company allowed toxic wastes to seep into the soil.

Initially, the agency had agreed to pay for the cleanup because it was believed that the previous owner of the site, the Edward Hines Lumber Co., was responsible for all dumping of toxic chemicals and Mid-South was not to

blame for any contamination there.

However, Tuesday, Aug. 27 the EPA postponed a public meeting set for the next day. It was postponed, Ms. Guay said, to determine if Mid-South had allowed the seepage of toxic wastes and how much of the cleanup it would be liable for.

Mid-South's share of the cleanup costs will be negotiated between the EPA and Mid-South, Ms. Guay said.

The 20-acre Mid-South site is about one-half mile southwest of Mena. It has been a wood-treatment facility since the late 1930s. In addition to contamination of the site, nearby residents have complained of noise and dust pollution created by operations there.

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